

The 2016 Winter Grazing Seminar, hosted by the Lake County Conservation District and the Ronan NRCS Field Office was a resounding success. Held on February 2nd and 3rd in Missoula and attended by over 170 grazers, scientists and resource professionals, the event was one of the largest grazing-related events ever held in Western Montana. The event featured over a dozen speakers including Steve Kenyon a grazer from Alberta, Steven Fransen, Ph.D. a forage expert from Washington State Extension, Dave Scott, a rancher and Livestock Specialist from the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Race King, ranch manager of La Cense Ranch in Dillon, Montana and Rick Caquelin, a rancher and grazing expert with the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The event was sponsored by the Montana Rangeland Resource Executive Committee as well as nearly 20 additional sponsors including the Montana's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

Winners of the 2016 Range Leader of the Year Awards were Ovando-area rancher Jim Stone and NRCS District Conservationist, Krist Walstad of Joliet.

Jim Stone a 3rd generation cattle rancher from Ovado. Jim, along with his wife Colleen and son Brady, own and operate Rolling Stone Ranch. Jim has been a leader with the Blackfoot Challenge, Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, North Powell Conservation District, Ovando School Board and the Ovando Fire Dept.

Krist Walstad is the District Conservationist in Joliet, he is married and has two children. Krist and has been heavily involved in the Sage Grouse Initiative, as well as both fire and flood relief programs while stationed in Roundup. Krist's leadership and dedication to Montana's people and natural resources deserves applause and recognition.

Speakers at the grazing seminar presented on a litany of topics including soil health, plant physiology, livestock management, winter feeding and grazing ideas, cover crops, grazing for weed control, forest understory management, animal performance and monitoring grazingland for success. On the first day speaker presentations were followed by a diverse panel that explored many of the aforementioned topics in detail. The panelists provided an extremely well-rounded and diverse discussion including lots of audience questions and participation. On the second day of the seminar, attendees were able to select their most desired topic and speakers from any one of four that was offered during each of four sessions.

Lake County Conservation District and the Ronan NRCS Field Office are proud to work cooperatively with our wonderful partners to bring increased education and awareness to Montana's grazing resources. We are proud to work with agricultural producers from throughout Montana who are dedicated and devoted to the continued preservation of Montana's abundant natural resources.